

25 GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNERS TO WATCH

JENTRIE ALDERSON, SOUTHEAST OF SALINE

A state champion as a sophomore in 2019 when she blew away the field with a 43-second victory, Alderson fought illness throughout the 2020 season, missing most of the season. She returned late in the season and won a regional championship for the second straight year. Alderson wasn't able to defend her 3A title, but battled to a seventh-place finish that was key in helping the Trojans capture the Class 3A team championship.



Jentrie Alderson



Aubree Blackman

AUBREE BLACKMAN, OLATHE WEST

In two high school seasons, Blackman already has a pair of top-five individual finishes at the Class 6A state meet, taking third as a freshman in 2019 and fifth last year as a sophomore. She led West to the Class 6A team state championship last year as the Owls won by one point over Blue Valley Northwest. Blackman was Sunflower League runner-up as a freshman and ninth last season and has a career personal best of 18:45.



Madeline Carter

MADELINE CARTER, WASHBURN RURAL

Coming off a solid freshman season in 2019 when she took fourth at the Centennial League meet and third at regionals, Carter avoided the sophomore slump and improved on her first-year results. She finished runner-up to Manhattan's Jenna Keeley at both league and regionals and then earned her first state medal with an eighth-place finish at the Class 6A state meet. Carter opened the 2021 season with a win at the Manhattan Invitational.

KATHIE CHAVEZ, COLBY

Chavez was a model of consistency for the Eagles last year as a freshman. She placed top four in all but one meet, taking sixth at the regular-season meet in Wamego. She was third in the Class 3A meet at Wamego with a 20:41. Chavez ran her best time of the season at the Great Western Activities Conference meet, taking second with a 19:39. The multi-sport athlete also medaled in state wrestling and track last year.



Kathie Chavez



Landon Forbes

LANDON FORBES, BISHOP CARROLL

Forbes vaulted from Bishop Carroll's junior varsity to varsity last season, and capped the impressive rise with a third-place finish in Class 5A. Now a junior, her time of 19:13 helped the Golden Eagles come within one point of winning a team championship. Forbes finished seventh or better in all eight of her 2020 races.

HANNAH GIBSON, SM SOUTH

Gibson claimed last year's Sunflower League championship against a loaded, young field, edging eventual 6A state champion Anjali Hocker Singh of Olathe North by three seconds for the title with a career-best time of 18:09. After a regional runner-up finish, Gibson couldn't quite keep pace with Hocker Singh at state and took seventh, two spots lower than her state finish as a freshman in 2019.



Hannah Gibson

ANJALI HOCKER SINGH, OLATHE NORTH

It didn't take Hocker Singh long to announce her presence as one of the state's top distance runners, bursting onto the scene last year as a freshman. After finishing runner-up at the Sunflower League meet, Hocker Singh kicked it into high gear, taking a regional title before adding the Class 6A state championship. Hocker Singh outlasted Blue Valley Northwest senior Riley Beach to win by three seconds in 18 minutes, 39.16 seconds. Hocker Singh has already topped last year's season best of 18:12.2 with an 18:04.4 at this year's season-opening JK Gold meet at Augusta, winning by 25 seconds against a field that included two-time 5A champion Hope Jackson of Bishop Carroll.



Anjali Hocker Singh



Hope Jackson

HOPE JACKSON, BISHOP CARROLL

Jackson, a senior, won her second Class 5A individual title last fall after finishing fourth as a freshman. Her six-second victory in the 2020 meet at Augusta's 4 Mile Creek Resort was a challenge, as a vocal cord condition made breathing difficult. She won all seven races she entered in 2020, setting a personal best of 17:58 at regionals. Jackson swept 5A titles in the 1600 and 3200 at the state track meet in May.

JENNA KEELEY, MANHATTAN

Keeley enters her senior season as the two-time defending Centennial League champion, winning last year's championship by nine seconds. She added a Class 6A regional title to her resume last year as well after taking runner-up at regionals as a sophomore. At last year's Class 6A state meet, Keeley improved on her 20th-place finish at state as a sophomore, moving up to fourth. Battling an injury to start the 2021 season, Keeley missed the Indians' opening meet but will return.



Jenna Keeley

MADDY KRUEGER, MINNEAPOLIS

It didn't take long for Krueger to establish herself as a force to be reckoned with in Class 3A last year as a freshman. Krueger captured the North Central Activities Association championship, leading a 1-2 finish with teammate Alayna Cossaart and then took second at regionals to eventual state champion Lara Murdock of Colby. Krueger finished the season strong at state, taking fifth in 20:51.31, and will team with Cossaart, who was sixth at state, to give the Lions a strong 1-2 punch.

GRACE MEYER, SM EAST

A track standout for the Lancers, Meyer joined the cross country program last fall as a junior for the first time. She finished fifth at the Sunflower League meet and took sixth at the Class 6A state meet, helping the Lancers to a fourth-place team finish. Meyer followed it up with a strong season in track where she won the Class 6A 800 by .01 seconds over 6A cross country state champion Anjali Hocker Singh of Olathe North.

KATE MILLER, OLATHE WEST

Miller came through in a big way for Olathe West last year as a freshman. Her 14th-place finish at the state meet was a huge factor in the Owls nipping Blue Valley Northwest by one point for the Class 6A team title. Miller was a regional runner-up to lead the Owls at that meet and also took fourth at the Sunflower League meet. She and fellow sophomore Bree Newport will team with returning junior Aubree Blackman to lead the Owls in their quest for a second straight championship.



Kate Miller



Paige Mullen

PAIGE MULLEN, SM NORTHWEST

In a Sunflower League chocked with young talent, Mullen stacks up with the best of them. Mullen placed top-four at all three postseason races last year as a sophomore, taking third at the Sunflower League meet, fourth at her Class 6A regional and third at the Class 6A state meet. That was an improvement on her 10th-place finish at state as a freshman in 2019. Mullen posted a season-best time of 18:18.8 at last year's league meet.

MONTANA OHMART, COLUMBUS

A junior, Ohmart already has two top-10 finishes at state on her resume. After placing seventh at the Class 3A state meet as a freshman in 2019, Ohmart cracked the top five last year, finishing fourth. Ohmart also captured a regional championship last season and won six races overall, posting a career-best time of 20:29.



Montana Ohmart



Sydney Owens

SYDNEY OWENS, EUDORA

With the graduation of four-time state champion Taylor Briggs of Chapman, the Class 4A title will be there for the taking and Owens is a good bet to be a major factor in taking over and starting her own run of titles. Last year as a freshman, Owens captured a regional championship with a season-best time of 19:29 and then finished runner-up to Briggs at the state meet, clocking a 20:09.70. Owens also took third at the Frontier League meet.

CHESNEY PETERSON, STANTON COUNTY

Peterson emerged as one of the top distance runners in the state last year as a sophomore. She is the defending Class 2A state champion, setting a course record with an 18:17.1 at Sand Plum Nature Trail in Victoria. The Stanton County girls won state as a team. She was undefeated in the cross country season last year and won the HI-Plains League meet for the second straight season. In track, Peterson claimed state titles in the 3,200, 1,600 and 800, and she anchored Stanton County’s state-champion 1600 relay team.



Chesney Peterson



Katie Schwartzkopf

KATIE SCHWARTZKOPF, MILL VALLEY

Schwartzkopf burst onto the scene in 2018 when she stunned the Class 6A field, winning the state title as a freshman with a 23-second win, leading the Jaguars to the Class 6A team title as well. Though she hasn’t added a second title to her collection, she’s proven that victory wasn’t a fluke. Schwartzkopf finished second at state in 2019 to Blue Valley’s Tori Wingrove, again leading the Jaguars to the state title, and then last year added a second straight runner-up finish, this time in Class 5A to two-time state champion Hope Jackson of Bishop Carroll.

RILEY SMITH, BALDWIN

Smith has cemented herself in Baldwin’s rich history of standout runners, leading the Bulldogs to the Class 4A team title last year – the program’s 12th overall. Smith finished fifth at the state meet, leading five Bulldogs in the top 20. She was a regional runner-up to Eudora’s Sydney Owens and took fourth at the Frontier League meet. A three-time state placer, Smith was 16th as a freshman in 2018, helping Baldwin to a team title, and jumped to sixth as a sophomore in 2019.



Riley Smith

KAYLEE TOBABEN, OLATHE NORTH

On a team chocked full of young standouts, Tobaben more than holds her own as the elder stateswoman of the group. A senior this season, Tobaben took eighth at the Sunflower League meet, third at regionals and 13th at state last year as a junior. She was seventh at state as a sophomore in 2019, also taking third at league that season. She's helped lead North to third-place team finishes each of the last two seasons.



Kaylee Tobaben



Hayley Trotter

HAYLEY TROTTER, CLEARWATER

Trotter enters her junior cross country season on the heels of winning the Class 4A 800 meters and finishing third in the 1600 at the state track meet in May. While the 4A cross country title was monopolized by Chapman's Taylor Briggs the past four years, Trotter could be in a short line as successor. She finished 12th as a freshman and third last fall.

OZIA TRUJILLO, SOUTHWESTERN HEIGHTS

Trujillo was the runner-up in the Class 3A cross country meet last year as a sophomore, running a 20:11.12. She has an unofficial school record in the 5K and an official school record in the mile. Trujillo was a regional cross country champion in 2019 and 2020. She took eighth place at state cross country as a freshman in 2019. Trujillo constantly placed top five in meets throughout her freshman and sophomore seasons.



Ozia Trujillo

ELIZABETH VETTER, ANDOVER

Vetter's third trip to the state cross country meet was her best last fall, as she ran 19:17.7 to finish fourth in 5A. Her earlier trips produced 38th and 17th place finishes. Her three victories last season included the Ark Valley-Chisholm Trail II title, and she finished no lower than fourth with a personal best of 19:00.



Josie Ware

JOSIE WARE, WEST ELK

Ware, a senior, has developed from a reluctant cross country participant her freshman year, according to Patriots coach Bobbie Wiseman, to one of Class 2A's best. She has set and re-set West Elk's school record, which stands at 19:01, and vaulted from a 30th place finish at state as a sophomore to fifth last season. Ware was unbeaten as a junior up until state, and won the Burlington Invitational 4K to start her final campaign.

EMMA WEINER, GOLDEN PLAINS

Weiner took third at the Class 1A state cross country meet in Victoria with a 20:27.2. Weiner was a regional champion in cross country. She is the current school record holder in the women's 5K. In track, Weiner was the state champion in the 1,600 and state runner-up in the 3,200. She was also the regional champion in the 3,200 and 1,600.



Emma Weiner

ELLE WILLIAMS, DONIPHAN WEST



Elle Williams

Williams has been the driving force behind Doniphan West's emergence as a Class 1A power, leading the Mustangs to two straight state championships. After placing 15th at state as a freshman, she rocketed up to a fourth-place finish as a sophomore in 2019, leading Doniphan West to the first state championship in school history. She followed that up with a runner-up finish to three-time state champion Jaycee Vath of Lincoln last year as the Mustangs won a second straight crown. The school record-holder, Williams will look to lead Mustangs to a three-peat this season.

VICTORIA WINGROVE, BLUE VALLEY

Wingrove captured the Class 6A state championship as a sophomore in 2019, knocking off defending champion Katie Schwartzkopf of Mill Valley for the title with a 17-second win in 18:24.7. Wingrove couldn't duplicate that championship performance last year, slipping to a 12th-place finish at state. She also took sixth at the Eastern Kansas League meet after winning the league title as a sophomore. Wingrove placed sixth at state as a freshman.



Victoria Wingrove